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FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[11 March 1998]

GE.98-11212 (E)

1. The Declaration on human rights adopted by consensus at Vienna in June 1993 and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development of 1995, while not binding, represent solemn undertakings by almost all States against, in particular, hierarchism in the approach to, and practise of human rights: no right has priority over any other. In particular, there is no priority for civil and political rights over economic and social rights.

2. The Copenhagen Declaration (A/CONF.166/9) proclaims - many States' economic policies notwithstanding - the absolute primacy of social development, with all States undertaking to "focus [their] efforts and policies to address the root causes of poverty and to provide for the basic needs of all. These efforts should include the elimination of hunger and malnutrition; the provision of food security, education, employment and livelihood, primary health-care services ... Special priority will be given to the needs and rights of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons" (Ibid., chap. I, Commitment 2).

3. Given the successes that the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights and Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development represented for the United Nations, there can be no question of considering the Declarations adopted there as purely formalistic pronouncements by States with no real interest in their contents (especially as most of the participating countries were represented at the very highest level).

4. The Commission on Human Rights would therefore be justified in taking account of the principles set forth in these Declarations and promoting, by all possible means, international awareness of them.

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